GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE: The Principles, Methods, History and Results of its Several Departments and of the Whole. By Charles Augustus Briggs, D. D., Edward Robinson Professor of Biblical Theology in Union Theological Seminary, New-York City. Octavo, pp. xxii, 688, Charles Scribner's Sons.

There are two methods of studying the Bible. For the most part, these two methods are irreconcllable with each other, those who adopt one of them being committed to conclusions that deny the premises of the other method. Simply for convenience in discussing them, these two methods may be called the extra-rational and the rational, though it should be said that some of the implications of meaning in these two words must not be too closely pressed. Many who accept the extra-rational view of the Bible accept also certain conclusions of the rational theory of its origin and character; and many, like Dr. Briggs himself, who stand for a rational interpretation of the sacred books, accept implicitly the extra-natural elements in it as proving it to be a divine revelation of truth

Nevertheless, the line of demarcation between the two views of the Bible is very clearly defined. According to one view, the Bible is literally the Word of God. He guided the pens or controlled the words of its various authors. It contains, therefore, no error or mistake of any kind whatever. Even its obiter dicta, its incidental references to history, geology, astronomy or geography, are divinely true, although investigation may seem to prove them untrue The Bible, according to this view, is the one infallfile body of truth in the whole world. To doubt or deny the least of its statements is to impugn the revelation of God Himself and to challenge His avenging wrath. It is true there seem to be discrepancies or contradictions in the Bible. But that fact does not in the least disturb those who hold this view of it. Either these discrepancies and contradictions crept into the later manuscript copies of the sacred books, or they could be explained by some facts not known, in which case they exist in order to try men's faith, and therefore to accept them without attempting to explain them is a godly act. It follows from this that any critical examination of the Bible is not merely unnecessary, but is blasphemous. The last book of the Bible was written many hundred years ago, after which the Canon was closed. A sort of sacred tradition has handed down to the faithful a certain approved interpretation of the books and their teaching. It is the duty of all to accept that interpretation as, in effect, a part of the Bible itself. But they cannot do that if they begin any independent investigation of the Such an investigation will lead to conclusions subversive of the sacred tradition in innumerable points. It will disprove the assumed dates of many of the books, and will throw doubts on their reputed authorship. It will find errors in the narrative that cannot be explained away. It is entirely logical, therefore, for those who accept the traditional view of the Bible to oppose any critical examination of it. For if the right to test its statements by investigation and reason be once granted, the whole traditional theory of the book will inevitably go by the

On the other hand, those who accept the rational method of studying the Bible say that tradition, as such, has no binding force. It is often founded on ignorance and misconception, The scientific critics of the Bible in the churches believe implicitly that the Bible contains a revelation of divine truth to men. Its teaching in regard to faith and morals is infallible. But it is not absolutely inerrant as to all matters of history, geology, astronomy and geography, concerning which it makes incidental statements Its writers were not verbally inspired. They did not write as machines. They were inspired simply as to the substance of the spiritual revelation they were commissioned to proclaim. But they indited that revelation under the limitations of ignorance or prejudice incident to them as human beings. In regard to all mundane temporaries; sometimes not as much their moral code was often imperfect, because it was necessarily a reflection of the moral ideals of their time. Moreover, say the critics, tradi- to expect still greater light to break forth from tion, which is the child of credulity and ignorance, has fastened upon the Bible a great mass pared to receive it. The Church did not attain of beliefs and opinions that are wholly alien to it. Not only is it the duty of Christians to-day to disregard these human additions to the Bible, but it is their farther duty to drive them out of the Church as blasphemous conceits, tending that is not growing in grace is a lukewarm, if to make the Word of God of no effect, "teach-

board.

It is as an advocate of the latter conception of the Bible that Dr. Briggs comes before the publie in this volume. As all our readers doubtless know, his right to hold and teach this conception of the book was questioned by the denomination of which he was formerly a minimer, and is now being vehemently disputed by certain persons in the denomination which he recently joined. But it needs hardly to be said that in this place no cognizance can be taken of this purely ecclesiastical question. Our only concern is to decide how Dr. Briggs, the Biblical scholar, has acquitted himself of the task he set out to perform; namely, to give, without fear or cal scholarship concerning the Bible. It gives stands easily among the foremost Biblical scholars of the age, has done his work thoroughly and well. No one competent to pass judgment on the question can read this learned and illuminating volume without feeling that it has added much to the stock of knowledge concerning the Bible. It transports the reader out of the feverish atmosphere of sectarian logomachy, where A partisans shout shibboleths at each other in a very frenzy of passion, to the calm atmosphere of investigation, where the truth and the truth alone is sought, no matter what views or traditions it may controvert. Dr. Briggs is an original scholar in his chosen department of study. But, like every true scholar, he has assimilated the work of others, who have worked along the same lines, so that in this volume one may find a comprehensive summary of the whole field of modern Biblical criticism.

But far more important than the specific conclusions of modern Biblical criticism as embodied in Dr. Briggs's book is the scientific method adopted by Biblical critics. That method, in brief, is to study the Bible in the light of all facts, external as well as internal, that are tory, geology, archæology, language or tradi-

The Sacred Scriptures are composed of a great variety of literary products, the results of the thinking, feeling and acting of God's people in many generations. Though guided by the Divine Spirit, so as to give one divine revelation in continuous historical development, they yet, as literary productions, assume various literary styles, in accordance with the culture, taste and capacity of their authors in the different periods of their composition. Especially is this true of the Old Testament, which contains the sacred literature of the Hebrews through a long period of literary development. For their proper interpretation, therefore, we need not only the religious spirit that can enter into sympathetic religious spirit that can enter into sympathetic relations with the authors, and through vital union with the Divine Spirit interpret them from their immost soul; we need not only training in grammar and logic to understand the true con-tents of their language and the drift of their discourse; we need not only a knowledge of the laws, doctrines and institutions in which the laws, doctrines and institutions in which the authors were reared, and which constituted the necessary grooves of their religious culture, but in addition to all these we need also a literary training, an æsthetic culture, in order that by a true literary sense and a sensitive and refined æsthetic taste we may discriminate poetry from prose, history from fiction, the bare truth from its artistic dress and decoration, the fruit

of reasoning from the products of imagination and fancy.

First, then, criticism applies the historical test. It finds, for instance, an internal evidence that Isaiah xi-lxvi was not written in the time of Hezekiah, according to the traditional view, but in the time of the exile. In the same way it finds that the Pentateuch, in its present form, was not written by Moses, but compiled at a much later period from many old documents or traditions. Next, it settles many questions of authorship and date by style, etymology, syntax and dialect. If, for instance, a book purporting to be written by Moses, is found to con tain words, phrases and modes of spelling that came into use many hundred years later, the modern critic at once decides that the book was either written or edited in the latter age.

Still again, criticism infers the composite au thorship of a book that contains matter out of harmony with the assumed age of its composition. The Book of Ruth, for instance, quotes from Psalm xcl. which shows that Ruth was written possibly from old materials after the The argument from silence is also Psalm. recognized. When, for instance, we find in an early writer mention without censure of worship on high places it is inferred that these writers knew of no legislation against this wor ship. Similarly, the omission of any reference to the sin-offering in Psalm li implies that the Psalm was written before the sin-offering was established. Again, criticism considers the evidences of interpolation in the Biblical books, many of which it has found, and the question of authorship, in regard to which tradition cannot be depended upon. A careful study of the books themselves, indeed, according to the critics, shows that in many cases tradition is wholly wrong. There are also, it is said, pseudonymous books in the Bible, as, for instance, Ecclesiastes, the author of which used the name of Solomon. Lastly, the claim is made that many books of the Bible are compilations of many old documents and traditions, into which were woven. with more or less skill, the ideas and coloring of the compiler or editor.

The presence of myths in the Bible is recog-

nized by the critic. Take, for example, the story of the intermar-Take, for example, the story of the intermarriage of the daughters of men with the angels, in Genesis, vi. 1-14. If this story were found in any other sacred book but the Bible, no one would hesitate to regard it as a myth. Vain efforts have been made in recent times to explain away the angels in various ways, but no respectable commentator would countenance with a thing in our days. There can be not such a thing in our days. There can be no doubt whatever that the passage refers to andoubt whatever that the passage refers to angels. Why, then, should we hesitate to regard it as a myth? A myth is not necessarily untrue to fact; it is rather a popular imaginative coloring of a conception of fact or of a real fact. It is not necessary to deny that there was such a real union of angels with mankind, even if one hints that the form of the story is mythical.

Criticism also finds numerous legends in the Bible as well as idyllic poems, dramas and novelettes. Such are the books of Hebrew literature which are collectively called the Bible.

They vie with the literary models of the best nations of ancient and modern times. They ought to receive the study of all Christian men and women. They present the greatest variety and women. They present the greatest variety of form, the noblest themes and the very best models. Nowhere else can we find more admirmodels. Nowhere else can we find more admirable esthetic as well as moral and religious culture. Christian people should urge that our schools and colleges attend to this literature, and not neglect it for the sake of the Greek and Roman literatures, which, with all their rare forms and extraordinary grace and beauty, yet lack the Oriental wealth of color, depths of passion, heights of rapture, holy aspirations, transcendent hones and transforming moral power. scendent hopes and transforming moral power

The function of Biblical criticism is twofold namely, destructive and constructive. It aims to show that there are errors and inconsistencies in the present text of the Bible, and that many of the commonly accepted views as to its au thorship and date are altogether erroneous. It finds no proof in the Bible itself of the theories of inerrancy and verbal inspiration that are held by so many people. But while thus tearing down the old scaffolding that plous believers erected around the Bible, the critics do not forget the work of construction. They maintain that the refutation of false views concerning the book brings into clearer light not merely its matters, they knew no more than their con- credibility, but its authority as a revelation of spiritual truth to man.

of grace from the Scriptures. We have a right the Scriptures when the Church has been preits maturity at the Nicene Council. Augustine was not the highest achievement of Christian faith and experience. The Protestant Reformation did not introduce the golden age. A Church not a dead, Church. A theology that is not ing for commandments the doctrines of men." progressive is a bedridden, if not a dead, theology. The Church needs a greater reformation living in the Holy Spirit, a deeper quickening, a more intense devotion in love and service to our Saviour and the interests of His Kingdom. We are convinced that the seeds of such a reformation are embedded in the Bible, only waiting a new springtime of the world to shoot forth. The grace of God will reveal itself to another Luther and another Calvin at no very distant day, in vastly greater richness and fulness, for the sanctification of the Church, and the preparation of the Bride for her Bridegroom. In the mean time, it behooves us all to turn away from the abnormal, immature and defective experiences and systems of very poor Christians so often held up to us as models for our attainment, and to set our faces as a flint against every wresting of Scripture in the interest of any dogma, new or old, and to fix our faith and love upon the image of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, the Crucified, risen, and glorified

WAGNERIAN WISEACRE.

HIS VIEWS ON THE RING OF THE NIBE. LUNGS.

THE PERFECT WAGNERITE. A Commentary on the Ring of the Nibelungs. By Bernard Shaw. 12mo, pp. vl. 170. Herbert S. Stone

Mr Shaw has a pretty way with him when he sets about demolishing in advance the foolish individuals who may happen to consider his ideas preposterous. We need not discuss their impertinencies, he says; and he goes on to assure us that whoever accuses him of reading his own socialistic ideas into Wagner's works of art may safely be dismissed as an ignoramus. We will not emulate Mr. Shaw. We will not accessible to scholarship in the domain of his- characterize him as an ignoramus nor the "Perfect Wagnerite" as an impertinence. But we will venture to observe that both book and author are curiously lacking in humor. Mr. Shaw, having a great enthusiasm for the music of Wagner, has carried his researches into the biography of the composer, and has discovered the socialistic elements in that biography familiar to all students. These elements are promptly put in their place by critics who know that Wagner was first and last an artist. Mr. Shaw, with the lack of humor to which we have referred, as promptly identifies his hero's sympathies for the ideas of 1848 with the ideas of the Ring of the Nibelungs. Describing the third scene of the "Rhine-Gold," he says: "This gloomy place need not be a mine; it might just as well be a match factory, with yellow phosphorus, phossy jaw, a large dividend, and plenty of clergymen share-holders. Or it might be a

creature may be able to hymn exultantly to his

Plutonic idol: Thou mak'st me eat whilst others starve, And sing while others do lament; Such unto me Thy blessings are,

As if I were Thine only care. Of course Mr. Shaw's assumption is that while the third scene of the "Rhine-Gold" may not be smeared over with phosphorus, while no figure in it may have a phossy jaw, it was composed to enforce the ideas of economic abnormality symbolized by a latter-day match factory. To prove all this, our author turns jauntily to "the facts of Wagner's life." He marshals all the hackneyed evidence, tells you how the compose flung himself into the political struggles of his time, and reminds you that in Germany "the proclamation summing up Wagner as 'a politcally dangerous person' may be consulted to this day." He is ingenious in his argument. All these wiseacres are. Mr. Sidney Lee, satirizing the Baconian hypothesis at a Shakespeare dinner the other day, "undertook to prove to any impartial jury who were pledged to abide by the spurious logic of the Baconians that every poem usually assigned to Lord Tennyson was really the exercise of Mr. Gladstone's recreation." Similarly, we do not doubt that among Wagnerites with Fabian Society tendencies Ma Shaw could easily demonstrate that all the creations of Wagner's musical genius were the pas world three square meals a day and a royal wage, with only five hours' work. But we do not all belong to the Fabian Society.

Wagner himself, when called as a witness, ob erves: "How can an artist expect that what he has felt intuitively should be perfectly realized by others seeing that he himself feels in the presence of his work if it is true Art, that he s confronted by a riddle, about which he, too, might have illusions, just as another might? Here Mr. Shaw has a momentary glimpse of the discretion which is precious among critics. "We are apt," he says, "to delfy men of genius, exactly as we delfy the creative force of the universe, by attributing to logical design what is the result of blind instinct." In this lucid interval Mr. Shaw ought to have realized that he was winnowing the wind in attempting so complacently to solve the riddle before which Wagner himself felt a certain trepidation; but, with the stodgy seriousness that marks his whole study, he drives away at his own hypothesis. Wagner's explanations of his works, we are told, "for the most part explain nothing but the mood in which he happened to be on the day he advanced them." This being the case, not throw overboard the composer's fatuous guesses at what he meant and listen to Mr. Shaw? Poor Wagner! We would throw him overboard at once if it were not for a sneaking eeling that he was, after all, the man of genius, creative artist, a being who gave us work surpassingly beautiful, and therefore meet to be regarded with admiration, not untinctured with humility. Our humility naturally seems to Mr. Shaw to be synonomous with utter imbecility. Unless the spectator recognizes in "The Ring of the Nibelungs," says Mr. Shaw, "an image of the life he is himself fighting his way through. it must needs appear to him a monstrous development of the Christmas pantomime, spun out here and there into intolerable lengths of dull conversation by the principal barytone." Now this, we may respectfully inform our "Perfect Wagnerite," is sublime folderol. We do not know whether it takes an "ignoramus" to produce folderol, but certainly Mr. Shaw is a master of the art.

Has he never heard of the profound utterance of Keats-

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty"-that is all Ye know on earth, and all ye need to kn Does he not know that, while savans have racked their brains to hit upon a restoration of the Venus de Milo which would explain exactly the significance of that mutilated statue, the world has gone on worshipping it as a miracle of loveliness? But we are well aware that suggestions of this sort can only provoke Mr. Shaw to fling a white-lead factory at us, or confront us with a phossy jaw. Pursuing doggedly his chosen theory, like a stolid Gradgrind, ruminating on the rule of three in a field of flowers, he eauty in Wagner's glorious compositions, or dismisses it as something on all Cloth, Extra. A story of the gay cavalier fours with the thoughtless pleasures of a Christmas pantomime. It is useless for him to drop owlish hints that no one could surpass him in appreciation of all that is beautiful in "The Ring of the Nibelungs." He cannot eat his cake and have it, too. We refuse to place any confidence in a critic who jumbles up with his perceptions of æsthetic phenomena an eccentric interpretation of the master under discussion only worthy of a conceited Philistine. We would not traverse his pages thus carefully if they were not written in a dangerously plausible manner. No previous book of Mr Shaw's equals this one in excellence of style.

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